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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001669

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/I, NEA/IR AND SAGSWA
NSC STAFF FOR MAGSAMEN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: MEK BLUSTER, IRANIAN ACCUSATIONS HINDER CHANCE FOR
COOPERATION AT CAMP ASHRAF

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1484

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 1106 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Robert Ford for reasons 1.4 (b-d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Mujahedin e-Khalq (MEK) leader Miriam Rajavi wrote to Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki on June 22 to assail the Iranian government and urge greater accommodation of the MEK's Camp Ashraf, even as Iranian media carried accusations that the MEK instigated deadly post-election rioting in Tehran. Camp Ashraf leaders were in a triumphal mood June 21 during a meeting with Embassy Baghdad and MNF-I, highlighting Rajavi's June 20 speech in France in which she cited Ashraf frequently directly linking it to demonstrations in Iran. We assess these actions will not be well-received by the GOI and will undermine recent Embassy efforts to defuse a standoff between the Camp residents and Iraqi police at the gate of the camp (REF A) including the June 10 first visit by the new Camp Ashraf committee. Although the Iraqi government has been willing to use a measured approach on Ashraf, the combination of Iranian accusations and MEK bluster could hinder the chances for cooperation. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) A variety of Iranian press reports on June 20 and 21 accused the MEK of instigating violent demonstrations following the June 12 presidential elections including purported confessions of MEK members broadcast on TV and the charges of a Tehran police official that the MEK sparked a demonstration in which 10 people were killed. Meanwhile MEK leader Miriam Rajavi spoke at a June 20 rally in France making repeated reference to the "steadfast" Ashraf, referring to the camp at one point as "the strategic nucleus" while calling Ashraf residents "the combatants of freedom." On June 22, an Iraqi website carried the text of a letter Rajavi reportedly sent to Iraqi PM Maliki calling for Iraqi officials to "separate their path from the path of the Islamic Republic's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad." She also recommended that the GOI turn Ashraf over to U.S. or U.N. supervision.

[1](#)3. (C) The speech and letter coincided with Embassy and MNF-I efforts to defuse a dispute over the GOI desire to place a police station in the camp (Ref A). TF-134 CG and Pol-mil mincouns arranged a visit by a delegation from the new GOI Ashraf Committee headed by PM advisor Ali al-Yasseri to meet with CAR leadership on June 10. After convincing al-Yasseri to brave the residents blockade at the gate of the camp, Yasseri spent 90 minutes explaining the GOI position on a police station and the need for the Ashraf residents to consider a voluntary move to another facility in Iraq further from the border with Iran that would be safer and not subject to Iranian attack. The Camp residents asked for recognition of their status in Iraq and presented a list of allegations of GOI refusal to let goods into Ashraf. While strongly opposed to the idea of a police station inside the camp, the

leadership agreed to consider the idea. Al-Yasseri promised to look into the list of allegations.

¶4. (C) In an Embassy/TF-134 visit to Ashraf on June 21 to follow up on the June 10 visit with the Camp leadership, an unusually upbeat Mojgan Parsaei uncharacteristically focused almost exclusively on MEK politics and recounted for Pol-Mil Mincouns and TF134 CG the highlights of Rajavi's June 20 speech, noting that Rajavi mentioned Ashraf a dozen times. Parsaei also relayed a message she said was from Rajavi to QParsaei also relayed a message she said was from Rajavi to the Embassy and MNF-I that Ashraf residents will return to Iran in the event of democratic change there. Parsaei said Rajavi reiterated longstanding MEK complaints (reftels) including a claim that the GOI is holding the camp in a state of siege at the behest of the Iranian government. Although Iraqi Army units controlled the perimeter of the camp, Rajavi wanted the USG to know that residents would never permit Iraqi police to establish a station inside Ashraf and would rather die than give in to the Iraqi government, Parsaei said.

¶5. (C) Pol-Mil Mincouns responded that Rajavi's speech references to Ashraf as a clearly anti-Iranian political entity will cause the GOI to redouble pressure on Ashraf as a demonstration of Iraqi sovereignty, making compromise more difficult. He said that Camp Ashraf has many enemies inside Iraq and that the speech suggested that Iraq was not responsible for Ashraf. He and TF134 CG urged the Ashraf leadership to work with the GOI to establish mutually acceptable conditions for a police station in Ashraf as a signal of recognition of Iraqi sovereignty over Ashraf city.

¶6. (C) Comment: Maliki has made crystal clear his absolute

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unwillingness to allow the MEK to continue to operate in Iraq as an anti-Iranian government organization. The MEK remains domestically unpopular because of widely-held belief that it carried out violence for Saddam Hussein against both Shia and Kurds. If the MEK continues to portray Ashraf as a base for resistance to the Iranian government, the natural GOI inclination to respond firmly to the instigation will be compounded by Iranian pressure (after the recent violence) to get the GOI to take action against the camp. Alternately, with the current climate of instability in Iran and the MEK's long and violent history, it is always possible that the Iranian government would attempt some type of action against Ashraf, likely through insurgent surrogates in Diyala province. In response, the Charge will urge caution with Maliki's chief of staff, while Pol-Mil Mincouns will engage with the head of the GOI's Ashraf committee and follow up with the Minister of Human Rights, who we believe has an increasing stature in the GOI to assist with this issue. We will seek a timely follow-up visit by the Ashraf committee to the camp. Where appropriate, we will remind relevant GOI officials of the GOI's assurances to treat Camp Ashraf residents humanely and in accordance with Iraq's constitution, laws, and international obligations. We will also continue to press the Camp Ashraf leadership to compromise with the GOI although Parsaei, who is typically gracious but taciturn, will have to come down from her buoyant mood, as she joked to the departing Pol-Mil Minister-Counselor that she would next see him in Tehran.

FORD